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PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
**WISCASSET FIRE SOCIETY.**

FOUR HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD  
QUARTERLY MEETING, JULY 20, 1906.



PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
FOUR HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD  
QUARTERLY MEETING  
OF THE  
Wiscasset Fire Society



WISCASSET, MAINE.  
Reprinted from THE SHEEPSHOT ECHO.

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# Wiscasset Fire Society.

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## The Four Hundred and Twenty- Third Quarterly Meeting.

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Held at The Albee—Entertained by Horace E.  
Henderson.

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The four hundred and twenty-third quarterly meeting of the Wiscasset Fire Society was held at the Albee House on the evening of July 20th, on the invitation of Mr. Horace E. Henderson. After an excellent supper Mr. Henderson in his capacity as host and moderator called upon Mr. William D. Patterson for an historial address, which has become one of the marked features of the summer meeting of the society.

In behalf of the resident members of the Society, Mr. Patterson welcomed the summer resident members and guests, alluded to the recent St. Lawrence trip of Messrs. Foote, Grant and Sewall, and continuing, said:

You followed in the path of Champlain, who was one of the great men France has given to the world, and who was the earliest summer visitor to Wiscasset, of whom there is record. Three hundred years ago last July he sailed up the Sheepscot river as far as this place,—in his passage up the river his little vessel grazing or touching upon what is now known as Clough's Ledge. At Wiscasset he had a conference with the natives, after which he proceeded down the back river and

through the Hell Gate passage to the lower Kennebec and thence to sea. But the future work of Champlain, "soldier, sailor, explorer, administrator," was not to be identified with this part of North America. The English flag and the English cross were set up here by English sailors and English explorers, who were followed by English settlers and English soldiers, and this became New England and not New France.

Through the fog and mist of the night, and of the centuries behind us, it may be possible to discern other summer visitors to Wiscasset. Perhaps on a summer day, the Stuart Governor, Sir Edmund Andros, came here from Fort Charles at Pemaquid; and later, very probably, came Governor Phipps who, when a boy, used to tend his father's sheep on the hills yonder beyond Jewonkee. We have authentic record of the summer visits here of Henry Flint, of Cambridge, "rare old Tutor Flint," of Harvard College, who used to come here about one hundred and seventy-five years ago to visit the land which he held under the right of Dyer's purchase of the Indians. It is not likely that he here wore the clerical robe and bands depicted in his portrait now in the possession of Harvard College, yet coming at a time when there was no "Albee," no Middle street nor Fore Street and when the only building here was that of the Wiscasset Proprietors in which dwelt Robert Hooper, his visits were sufficiently notable to be remembered by Hooper's daughter, who bore witness to it nearly sixty years afterwards.

Here, too, must have come William Vaughan, dreaming of the conquest of Louisbourg, in the realization of

which he was of material aid when the arm of the old Bay Province was stretched forth to capture that stronghold of the French in North America. One of the Wiscasset Proprietors was Sir William Pepperrell, of Kittery, and he, no doubt, visited Wiscasset. And so we here and there get a glimpse of those who have preceded you, of those eighteenth century characters who were identified with the life of the Colony and Province, of Knox passing to and from his famous residence at Thomaston, of Dearborn as Secretary of War, and of others who have left no record of their impressions of the place. There were some, however, who made notes of their observations here, and from such notes quotations will be made.

About twenty years ago there was printed a book entitled "Retrospections of America," by John Bernard. Bernard was a relative of Sir Francis Bernard, a British Governor of Massachusetts, where he became so unpopular that when recalled, in 1769, his departure from Boston was celebrated by salvoes of artillery and other demonstrations of joy and relief. John Bernard was an actor, and the late Lawrence Hutton, who joined in an introduction to the book, called him one of the brightest of English comedians, and a shrewd social observer, quick to see, and acute in noting the value of what he saw. In England he was associated with Sheridan, Selwyn, Fox, and the leading wits and men about town, and in 1789 he was elected secretary of the famous Beefsteak Club of London. In the United States he was an important figure on the American stage of one hundred years ago, and was on terms of friendship, if not of intimacy, with

many of the distinguished sons of the Republic.

Of his life in the summer of 1807, when residing near Boston, he writes: "I thought of again visiting the north of New England on a lecturing tour, and arranged with Caulfield, (an actor of general utility, good in everything, but in nothing great), to accompany me, his style of singing and recitation rendering him a desirable coadjutor. The limit of our journey was to be Wiscasset, the extremest seaport of Maine."

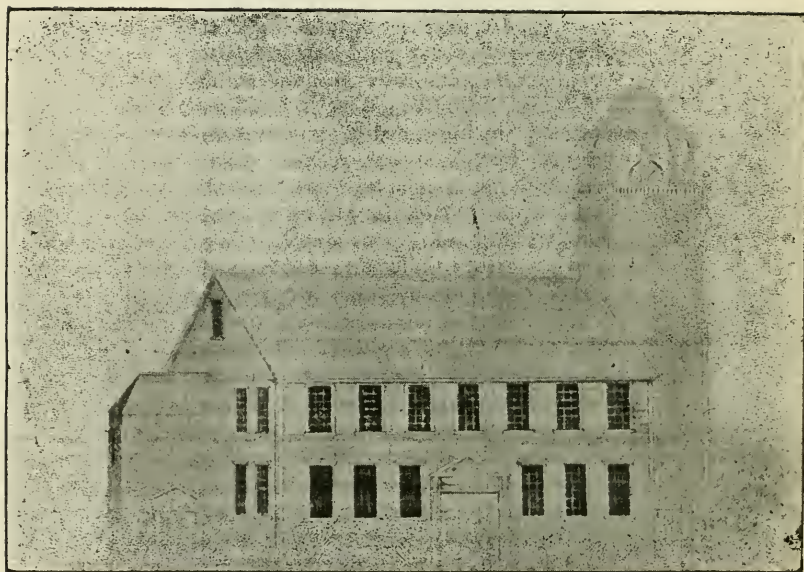
So, then, we next have here this man of the world, polished and intellectual, a keen observer and a ready writer, then at the height and maturity of his life, one who had been for ten years resident in this country. Journeying hither through Portland, Brunswick and Bath, he came to the limit of his tour. Let us hear what he says of Wiscasset:

"At Wiscasset we put up at an inn kept by an Irishman, and our bills for the ensuing evening being distributed directly, no sooner did the news become public than the little town which I apprehend had never before been visited in a similar manner, became greatly disturbed. A crowd soon collected round the windows of the inn parlor in which we were taking supper, to discover what kind of people we were. Several of the more respectable inhabitants took the liberty of stepping into the room, drawing a chair by the window and listening to our conversation. Others merely walked in as if to make an inquiry, and taking a comprehensive view of us from head to foot, at once withdrew to impart the information they had acquired to their friends; while a still larger class, more diffi-

dent than the rest, only opened the door, took a hasty glance, and then again quickly closed it. We were most amused by a portly, farmer-looking man, who, by his careless manner and easy speech, seemed to be a person of some consequence in the town, and who walked into the room, tilted his chair back by the window, and, throwing his boots over a bench, set himself deliberately to listen with great earnestness to our discourse. It happened that Caulfield was just relating in his humorous manner some ludicrous circumstance he had taken notice of during the day, and before long the farmer was so pleased that, clapping his hands to his sides, he threw himself back in his chair and burst into a loud roar of laughter. We put down our knives and forks, and looked round at our uninvited auditor in some surprise. On getting over his fit of risibility, he returned our gaze with a highly satisfied expression; then, getting up, put his hand in his pocket, and exclaimed, 'Capital, gentlemen! capital! You are right humorsome, I calculate. What's to pay?'

This produced a responsive roar from us, whereupon the rather puzzled worthy explained that from the humor and eccentricity Caulfield had displayed he had supposed that he was relating one of the stories from our entertainment, and, therefore, in the true spirit of honest trade, he wished to pay for what he had received. On being informed that we would accept no remuneration for what he had heard, he departed with a high opinion of both our talents and our liberality.

Less agreeable was the disappointment, on another ground, of a personage who merely put his head in at



Wiscasset Meeting House, 1773-1840.

the door and withdrew it the next minute, apparently in much dissatisfaction, for we heard him exclaim to a companion outside, 'Tarnation, Squire Shaw, they're not so *savage* after all!'

These singular attentions, however, though they only excited our smiles, were to my wife as annoying as they were astonishing; and Caulfield, perceiving this, hit upon a plan for relieving us of our wondering spectators without giving them offence. Taking a hint from the offer of the honest farmer, he called in the landlord and desired him to acquaint the people at the windows (which had neither blinds nor curtains) that our prices were a dollar apiece to hear our entertainment and half a dollar to *see ourselves*. They were too good judges of a bargain for this not to take effect."

He concludes his reference to Wiscasset with the statement that his two nights here were a great success.

John Binney, a Massachusetts man, lived here from 1809 to 1814. He was in command of the fort on Davis Island, but the block house not having sufficient quarters, he obtained permission to sleep out of garrison. The house that he occupied with his family is that now owned by Charles E. Knight, Esq. Captain Binney's private letters contain much of interest descriptive of the times and individuals in Wiscasset. In November, 1809, he wrote:

"Since our arrival we are well. Our house is warm. We have plenty of beef at 7c, excellent mutton at 6c, fowls 1-6d per pair, geese 2-3d each, no want of meats of any kind. Vegetables scarce, we get them from Boston by coasters. No fruits here. My

men kill me partridges & squirrels & catch me fish. Fire wood is plenty, potatoes scarce throughout the country. \* \* \* \* \* Here is a meeting-house & Revd. Mr. Packard, Congregationalist, a very good, still, quiet, peaceable man, preaches rather too much fire & brimstone, is severe in meeting, but liberal in company, I am pleased with him. There are many of the Stinchfield Baptists, some Methodists, some Quakers & some Catholics & a large number of Nothinarians. Here is an Academy, the preceptress Miss Stephenson, from Cohasset, a woman of tolerable sense. A Town School for large boys & girls & many public & private schools for small children. \* \* The people are polite & genteel. Tea parties as in Hingham. Mrs. B. is almost daily invited out & we have no cause of complaint of the Inhabitants in any respect. \* \* \* We have mails from Boston twice a week postage twenty-five cents. I believe Mrs. B. has been to more tea parties since she has been here, than for some years in Boston: for in that respect Wiscasset has the prevailing manner or fashion of Hingham: afternoon visits and tea parties are all the rage, & for dress the ladies out do everything this side of New York for 'tis from New York they get their fashions. I see Miss Stephenson frequently & think her a fine girl. Capt. Parker a widower of this place, has been trying to make love to her, but it has come to nothing, she appears difficult & he difficult."

The next to appear is a handsome, rosy-cheeked young fellow of extensive reading and scholarly ways. He was of English birth, but coming to New England when a child he ever



Residence of Judge Lee, 1808-1814.

after called this land his home. He was a student at Harvard College, afterwards read law in the office of the celebrated Judge Wilde, at Hallowell, and was admitted to the bar in 1810, in which year he entered upon the practice of his profession in Wiscasset. To his ever-ready pen we are indebted for many an interesting note on the town, its people and their ways. What says John H. Sheppard? Of the town in 1810 he wrote:

"Wiscasset is a very singular town, containing about twenty-one hundred inhabitants, a multitude of pretty girls, perhaps an hundred sea captains and fifty majors, a few handsome houses and many handsome ships.

\* \* \* \* We have in this place more aristocracy of wealth than any town of its size I know of in New England. Maj. Carleton is said to be worth 400,000 dollars, Maj. Wood 300,000, General Payson one [hundred thousand,] Maj. Elwell 80 [thousand,] and there are twenty perhaps worth 20,000 & several traders are doing handsomely on small capitals or handsome credit. Being the shire town of the County the District & Supreme Courts sit here, & the Court of Common Pleas is divided between this town, Warren & Topsham.

The society of Wiscasset is very mixed and indiscriminate. Mr. Bradford's, Mr. Lee's & the Wood's family are genteel and not unacquainted with elegance—Maj. Carleton's is hospitable & pleasant & Gen'l Payson's rich but frequently uncourtly. They are all fond of making parties—some of giving dinners & some suppers. At the tea parties there is generally a large Collection, you see some beautiful faces & a few fine forms.

In this Town there are six Lawyers—

Judge Lee, now Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas—Mr. Merrill, his former partner, Clerk of the Insurance Company—Mr. Bailey, a sensible, benevolent, pleasant man—a Widower & possessed of a pretty property by marriage—Mr. Smith, an old Practitioner, good to hunt up evidence and quote old Authorities—E. Flagg, who came a month before me

I board at a public hotel with traders, captains, strangers, &c. We have many parties in this place in the winter. Our young men are regular, rough, & open hearted Our young ladies gay, volatile & pretty."

At a later date he wrote:

"Wiscasset the first two years (1810-1812) was a very gay & extravagant place. Costly furniture was in the houses; some had erected palaces & thereby entailed woe on their descendants— large dinner parties, frequent balls, rides, water excursions, and the people were very showy in dress & in their entertainments & the shipholders talked large of their amazing emoluments in trade. Ships were continually sailing to & fro with lucrative freights, & no place was richer or gayer of its size in the United States. There was, however, little literature, & all conversation was about voyages, banks & wealth. There were often many strangers in town, & as I could always form an acquaintance in a short time, I soon knew them & soon became intimate with the young men of the place."

Captain Samuel Parker, sometimes known as Esquire Parker, from holding a commission as a Justice of the Peace, was a man of social and agreeable qualities. He was a friend of both Binney and Sheppard, and in the

correspondence of the former is found a letter from which the following is an extract:

“Wiscasset July 27, 1813

“My dear sir—

I had determined not to write you until I had the pleasure of receiving a letter from you—But Mrs. Binney having referred you to me for many particulars which she says she could not find room in her last letter to relate, particulars in some degree interesting to myself I avail myself of half an hour’s time & *sans ceremonie* proceed to the narration—

In the first place you will have heard that our Town for a week was all bustle & confusion—The Town was crowded with people from different parts of the United States—At our House we had a delightful party consisting of Ladies & Gentlemen—Among the former was a Mrs. Parrott of Portsmouth a Lady distinguished for her elegant manners & polished conversation. I somehow or another had the pleasure of *ge’ting on the right side*, we walked & rode occasionally—This set the Gossips at work, & whether she or myself are left in the shape of the D—I or not, I am not now able to tell you—Be that as it may—she is as pure as the Virgin Mary & will frown upon the authors of any scandal that may be circulated. She has returned to Portsmouth & left her husband behind—she engaged to write me & Mrs. Binney says if I will show her the letters—she shall be able to judge of the correctness of my asseverations—to this I have agreed, if they should not contain the name of a Lady of this Town, with whom it is said I am violently in love—who this Lady is I will leave you to conjecture—However the Town is mighty



Residence of Hon. Abiel Wood.

busy about it since Mrs. P. left us—I would not, to you, deny the fact, if I thought there was any chance for me. I do not believe there is, altho' I have received many distinguished marks of her civility, & were it not for my age & pride, I should act a little foolishly perhaps—Boyd is rather feverish but I suspect after all, he will carry the day."

And now, Mr. Moderator, appears a woman. Shall she be heard? A very estimable lady who lives in this street informs me that she was considered "cracked", and there are indications that she had experiences which appear to have warped her views of humanity. Mrs. Royall, a southerner, travelled in Maine in 1827, and her somewhat rare book, "printed for the author" in Washington the next year, contains mention of this locality and its inhabitants. In describing her journey eastward through the coast towns she wrote:

"I turned off from the Kennebeck, a N. E. course from Bath, to visit Wiscasset, a few miles distant, a very handsome flourishing town on the Sheepscot river, which is navigable to Wiscasset. Wiscasset is a port of entry, and contains a court house, two churches, an academy, a bank, and two thousand one hundred inhabitants. The harbor is generally open all winter, affords great advantages for commerce, and has upwards of sixteen thousand tons of shipping. Wiscasset is beautifully situated, descending from an eminence gradually to the harbor, amidst the wildest scenery, formed by vast projecting rocks, which overhang the harbor, and gives great variety to the view. It is like all that I have seen of Maine, inhabited by a noble race of people,

who would kill one with kindness if they would submit to their overcharged hospitality. From what I have already seen of Maine, I should say, that in intelligence and hospitality, it greatly exceeds any of the New England states, and take it throughout, there is a uniform glow of good nature, and an easy familiar benevolence in the countenance of the citizens of Maine, altogether peculiar."

She found court sitting here, his honor, Judge Weston, presiding, "and all the world of lawyers." She visited the court room, which she describes:

"Here the bench is but little elevated above the floor of the courthouse, and instead of a long bench, the judge sits in a small square box—seats, however, extend from him on the right and left, quite across the house, and as for a bar, there is none; the lawyers sit in seats resembling the pews of a church in front of the judge. These pews fill the house back to the door, as near as they can sit one behind the other. The jury divide, one half sit on one side of the judge, and the other half sit on the other side; the sheriffs and marshals support the jury, from two to four sitting on the outside of the jury at each end, holding long staves in their hands, by which they are designated, strangers take their seats on the right and left of the judge. The clerk's table stands between the judge and the bar."

Here she met many of the residents of the village, and some of the lawyers mentioned by name were "the hon. B. Ames of Bath, whom I had the pleasure to see first in Wiscasset, also Messrs. Edmond B. Bowman, and Farley, of Thomastown, \*

\* \* both very gentlemanly men.

\* \* \* \* \* Amongst my favorites, I mean those worthy of favor, are the attorney general of the State, hon. E. Foote who resides in Wiscasset, Rev. Dr. Packard, Mrs. Lee, captain Boyd's family, T Brentnel, Esq., Lucius Bernand, hon. Abiel Wood," and others, of whom one was Maj. Samuel Page who was referred to as "the most saucy black-eyed Yankee I ever met with."

Calling Mrs. Lee "a most amiable female," she continues, "in saying this, however, I am not to be understood that other ladies in Wiscasset, are wanting in the hospitality, kindness and refinement, which are distinguishing traits of New England females, but particularly of Maine. Mrs. Boyd, (formerly of Newburyport,) is one of the most accomplished females of New England, and the captain is one of the most noble men in the world, and equally so are their daughters. Most of the citizens of Wiscasset are Unitarians, at the head of whom is Rev. Dr. Packard, both as pastor and principal of an academy. He is a man of extensive learning, talents and piety, and has contributed largely to the improvement of society in his day, being considerably advanced in years. Such a man in our country is of incalculable worth. Beloved and admired by all sects and parties, his life and talents are wholly devoted to the good of mankind."

She gave a long account of the trial of a cause which she heard in the court house, as well a relation of fancied or real slights that she met with here.

The curtain falls and we shall hear no more tonight of these interesting visitors of old.

Mr. Henderson then spoke briefly

of the loss which the Society had sustained in the death of Mr. Henry M. Prentiss, and called upon Mr. Grant who spoke as follows:

Mr. Moderator and Gentlemen:

Awhile ago Mr. Foote and I were very anxious for fear that we should not get to Wiscasset in time for the summer meeting of the Fire Society.

Accordingly we started from Chicago on the 30th of June and travelled incessantly 2000 miles by water and 1000 by land in two weeks; and finally we got here in high time for this high time. It reminds me of the nursery rhyme about the man who "ran fourteen miles in fifteen days and never looked behind him.

On the way Mr. Foote constantly called my attention to scenery or food which he considered fine, but with the remembrance of his last year's performance in the Grove as moderator of this body I could only answer him with the one word, you are a *finer*. We picked up Mr. F. W. Sewall on the way, and before we had had him with us more than ten minutes we concluded that the Wiscasset phenomenon was about the finest of all.

It is good to be again in this place and to find it so unchanged in its beauty and constant in its hospitality and to see this society so loyal to its traditions of duty and privilege, specially of privilege. It is more than a joy, it is a veritable inspiration, to see the new Hubbard Free Bridge, which makes all things here complete. I never could understand the frightful extravagance of the old Toll Bridge which shut in, like a Chinese wall, much that you wanted to be rid of and shut out many that you wanted to have come in. If a tramp wanted to go to Boothbay or Damariscotta (I

don't see why anyone should want to go away from Wiscasset) he found the gate shut tight; if a farmer from across wanted to water his horse at the town pump or to draw inspiration from Mr. Holbrook's Fountain of Joy, he too found the gate shut tight and it would open for him and his team only when the grim gatekeeper's itching palm had been well crossed with silver. Down with the Toll Bridges and the Corporate Greed in this land of the free and home of the brave! Come speedily the time when such things shall be as rare as wolves or bears, in the civilized portions of America.

All the members of the society who were at the last summer meeting are tonight among the living, save one; Mr. Henry M. Prentiss who just one year ago tonight, by the calendar, celebrated with us his sixty-fifth birthday. We remember how joyous he was then;—not less joyous now, but he cannot communicate it to us. But we live forever, for good or for evil, in the lives of those whom we have influenced by our lives. We drop a pebble into the sea. The ripples from it recede continually and continually widen their sphere of influence, and go on forever. Such is the influence of even the humblest life. If immortality were nothing beyond that, how glorious must his immortality be.

Mr. Prentiss was favored beyond the lot of most men in his heredity; his splended natural endowments were heightened by the choicest education, from which he profited most signally. He became familiar with the good and great and learned of the earth, and was himself an astronomer who might have directed an observatory, a botanist who might have controlled a museum, a naturalist who knew the

plumage and note of every bird, the habits and habitat of every animal. Moreover he was a linguist of rare accomplishments, a geographer without a rival, of international fame, an Arctic explorer who had never seen an ice floe, yet in the quiet of his library he wrought out and published his remarkable book on Arctic Currents in which he showed the way to the Pole and described in detail the Fram, and Nansen's voyage, before either Fram or Nansen were known to us or to him. What more could man have or wish? Well my friends all these distinctions were but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals when compared with the man himself. Anyone might possibly be an Astronomer or a linguist, difficult as these employments are, but Providence gives to few in such degree his sweetness of disposition, gentleness of character, inflexible firmness and justice of judgment, and true Godlike spirit of Democracy. These were the qualities which enabled this social leader, this scholar among scholars, this prince among princes, this athlete among the strong, this comforter of the weak, to be also, as he was, this man among men. His simple loving life here in Wiscasset was the crowning glory of it all. If there were any sermons in the stones however hard, he found them, and preached them; if there was good in any one however humble, he discerned and published it.

Be with us tonight O Gentle Spirit!  
We see thy beloved form, we hear thy  
mild words, yet not with the ears or  
eyes of sense. "But O the heavy  
thought that thou art gone; that thou  
art gone and never must return!"

Let us listen while his friends,  
Messrs. F. W. Sewall, Charles S. Sew-

all, Charles E. Knight, Winfield S. Peaslee, sing one verse from that famous XXII Ode of Horace, which he so loved; and which describes his character so truly that, though written two thousand years ago, it is a requiem for him and such as he.

*Integer vitae scelerisque purus  
Non egit Mauris jaculis nec arcu  
Nec venenatis gravida sagittis  
Fuscepharetra.*

But there is no man who would be less willing than Mr. Prentiss to have this summer meeting, inaugurated by him two years ago as an occasion of special joy, turned into a Lodge of Sorrow on account of his death. If he had one trait more marked than another it was his power of rejoicing with those who rejoice. By wise division of his time he gave to pleasure its due apportionment, and stimulated every form of happiness by his presence and his participation.

The Chinese wear white for mourning, symbolizing the new estate of those who have passed to the joys of that house where the many mansions be. Tonight we will not longer grieve because the common fate of man has come to our dear friend; but we will rejoice and be exceeding glad that it has been our precious privilege intimately to know and dearly to love a man so rare as he.

Let us fill our glasses to the brim, and before we sing the first verse of *Lauriger Horatius*, let us drink once to the blessed memory of our knight without fear and without reproach.

*Lauriger Horatius quam dixisti  
verum*

*Fugit Euro citius tempus edax  
rerum*

Chorus: *Ubi sunt O pocula  
Dulciora melle  
Rixae pax et oscula  
Rubentis puellae*

and once more to the lofty principles to which he was devoted, and to the peace and happiness of all those whom he held dear, pledging ourselves to hold them dear also.

*Crescit uva molliter, et puella  
crescit,*

*Sed poeta turpiter sitiens canescit.*

*Chorus: Ubi sunt O pocula*

and once again to Wiscasset which he loved so in his life and so honored in his burial, lying as to his mortal parts here among you, mingling his dust with that of your noble ancestors, while his soul is marching on.

The moderator then alluded very graphically to his experience during the past two weeks with a certain member who had manifested much interest in the approach of this meeting. "even," to quote the moderator, "dogging my footsteps and begging to be put upon the list of speakers, to which I finally consented, and now that his wish may be complied with, I give him this opportunity to be heard," and thereupon introduced Mr. Henry E. Scott, who said:

Mr. Moderator:

The pitcher that goes too often to the fountain is broken. The worm will turn. It is not for me to gainsay what the Moderator has said, for I might be fined if I did, but you may have heard the story of the bridegroom who was called upon at a banquet for some remarks and who, rising in confusion and laying his hand on the shoulder of the bride, began with the words: "This is forced upon me."

Now you, sir, by virtue of the despotic power which you are temporarily enjoying, by the grace of this society, are calling upon the members of this society, one after the other, to pay

their dues in the form of speech or song or story, all lawful money in this ancient organization. We could almost wish that your official chair might become vacant for a while, if under those circumstances we might escape compliance with your demands. Out in Kansas several years ago—I don't know just how aged this story is—in a township on the Nebraska border, a sheriff or other officer of the law was summoned in hot haste to stop a fight. He climbed a board fence, that happened to run right along the line separating Kansas from Nebraska, and to his surprise saw that one of the pugilists was his own son, who was engaged in administering a sound thrashing to the son of one of his most bitter political foes. Official duty called on him to intervene. Parental feeling prompted him to back up his boy. He began: "In the name of the State of Kansas I command you"—just at that moment the fence, crowded, as was to be expected, with spectators, toppled over, and the sheriff fell sprawling into the state of Nebraska. Jumping to his feet, he shouted; "Give it to him, John! Give it to him! I've lost my jurisdiction!"

Now I can assure our worthy Moderator, that if he should in any such way vacate his official post, we should all show the same regard and consideration for him as were shown to that distinguished scholar and diplomat, the President of the University of Michigan, at a recent dinner given in his honor by the Chinese minister. As President Angell in the course of the dinner attempted to change his position in his chair, his feet slipped on the polished floor and he glided gracefully under the table. In some confusion he regained his seat, but not a single muscle in the face of the

Chinese minister or of any of his official staff moved to betray the fact that they had noticed any unusual occurrence. After a while, however, the minister was seen to slip from his own chair and to find a temporary resting place on the floor. A little later his first secretary followed the example of his chief; and one after another, at convenient intervals of time, all of those "Heathen Chinees" had the misfortune of sliding from their chairs to the floor. But I am afraid, Gentlemen, that if we find ourselves under the table to-night, it will not be due wholly to oriental politeness, but also to the good cheer, the good spirit, of this festive occasion.

To come back to more sober sentiments, it is a very great pleasure to me to be present with you here to-night. Every four months, in January, in April, in July, in October, I receive, as each one of you receives, from our efficient Clerk one of those solemn summonses, stamped with the bucket of the Society, commanding me to give my attendance at the annual or quarterly meeting. Three times out of the four it is impossible for me to attend, but in July I come to take part in the deliberations of what I venture to call one of the most notable of the local societies in New England.

One hundred and five and one-half years have rolled by since this society was organized, and those men whose names are printed in capital letters at the beginning of our list of members began its active work. What is now the State of Maine was then a part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. What is now the Town of Wiscasset was then Pownalborough. Our town was then a flourishing seaport; the

sails of our ships gleamed in the sunlight at home and abroad; the "anvils rang," the "hammers beat," in many a shipyard along our water-front. To-day much of this has been changed. The daughter of Massachusetts has long ago left the maternal roof and entered upon her own career of honored statehood. The name of Powunaborough has disappeared from the map of Lincoln County. The motor boat and the pleasure yacht, the occasional three or four masted schooner, are the successors of the square-rigged ships of the olden time. But the Society survives, and deserves credit for surviving. Here in Wiscasset this organization of neighbors and friends has known how to adapt itself to changed conditions, to grapple with new problems, and to undertake new duties, while at the same time holding fast to the traditions handed down from the men of 1801. It is one of the best examples of the survival of the fittest.

After brief remarks from other members, the meeting was opened for a general discussion of the plan of establishing the Fire Society in permanent quarters which should contain a reading room and a museum, open daily to the public. It was the sense of the meeting that many people who had gone forth from Wiscasset would be interested in such an arrangement and would undoubtedly contribute to its foundation and support.

At present a stranger in Wiscasset has nowhere to go if he is looking for objects of interest and so finds even a few hours hanging heavily. There are many things locked in the store-rooms of private houses here which would interest both residents and vis-

itors and would illustrate the life of the village from its beginning. If the owners of these relics of the past could have a suitable and safe place for showing them they would be glad to have them where they could be seen. Wherever efforts of this kind have been made they have resulted in commercial benefit to the town by increasing the number of visitors, and in educational benefit to all concerned. The feeling was very strong that if a wise effort should be made for a permanent establishment success would be sure to follow.

A committee of eight, Erastus Foote of Chicago, Chairman, was appointed to give the subject further consideration, and to recommend to the society at the annual meeting in January, such changes in its organization as might be necessary in order to carry out the proposed plan and to make such other suggestions as might aid in accomplishing the desired purpose. It is hoped that this action of the society will result in the purchase of some century old dwelling which will of itself be of historic interest as the residence of some well known early family; and the endowment of the enterprise with an income adequate for its proper maintenance. From a few preliminary estimates it seemed probable that if a fund of five thousand dollars could be provided, the purchase of suitable quarters could be made, and an income could be realized sufficient for the care of the property in perpetuity.

After singing "Auld lang syne" the meeting adjourned.





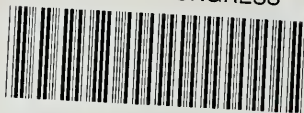
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